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ABSTRACT

 This document discusses the present status of schools
of education and indicates the need for improved leadership and
governance. Problems creating these needs and possible solutions are
suggested. (MJM)

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NEEDED: IMPROVED LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE FOR SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION

Donald J. McCarty¹

Teacher education is neither appreciated nor honored in our society. Its cultural function is perceived by many in the university community to be skill development of a most rudimentary kind. As a consequence, schools or departments of education suffer from incredibly low prestige in most colleges and universities. When a risk-taking teacher educator does try to advocate a radical experimental departure from conventional patterns, his efforts are usually vigorously rebuffed.² It is not surprising that a low profile is the most common posture taken by the official leaders of schools of education in their day-to-day responses to the governing strictures of their host institutions.

Few deans try to break out of this cocoon and challenge systemwide rules and regulations. Having made it into the deanship, most individuals try to stay there. This calls for avoidance of big risks. However, the danger in assuming a defensive role is that it will result in a self-fulfilling prophecy; too often the lack of an advocacy stance leads to daily accommodation with others in the university setting, rather than leadership in that system. Let us inquire into the reasons for this common phenomenon.

The National Academy of Education, modeled after the National Academy of Sciences, vividly illustrates how educationists attempt and fail to raise their self-esteem; an examination of the 1972 membership of 38 active members reveals that only 16 have conducted their scholarly work within Schools of Education. Moreover, only two of the 16 educationists on the membership list are now working in public universities; the preeminent

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influence of a limited number of renowned private institutions, most of whom prepare very few teachers, is overwhelming. While educationists have sought to strengthen their respectability by attaching famous scholars from other disciplines to their status hierarchies, these overtures have not been reciprocal. Even the term, educationist, is a pejorative word in the academic culture. If it were not so, the National Academy of Education would extend nearly all of its invitations for membership to educationists. The talent pool is not that thin.

Nothing so enlightens us better on the status of educationists in higher education than the simple indices of institutional support. Poorer salaries, heavier teaching assignments, and crushing service obligations differentiate the professor of education from his more favored brethren in arts and sciences and the elite professional schools, particularly engineering, law, and medicine. Unhappily, too, monolithic uniformity characterizes professional teacher education programs everywhere. Educationists also suffer from a second class citizenship in academia; seldom are they tapped for distinguished chairs and rarely are they appointed or elected to prestigious faculty committees.³

These visible marks of inferiority are reinforced by budgetary discriminations; schools of education, as a class, are funded at the poverty level. Ironically, education courses have been salable and profit making; however, the surplus proceeds have been diverted by college presidents to more valued and more expensive subjects. Like the student who regularly receives a "C" no matter how hard he tries, the professor of education gradually begins to accept his second class

citizenship within the university setting. There is very little left to say, except that the allocation of money is an important indicator of an institution's value system.

Few would argue against the proposition that research in education suffers from the cult of immediacy. Generous lip service is given to the research concept but the rewards and prestige generally go to the entrepreneurs who take up whatever fad is in fashion and ride it into extinction. How many educationists spend full-time in research activities? How many post doctorals in education are in evidence on our campuses? Why has large scale developmental research drowned out basic research? To raise these questions is to answer them. Theoretical research in education is in full retreat.⁴

Neither is teacher education on the best of terms with its main client group, public school teachers. Most teachers show transitory or short-lived allegiance to the School of Education which spawned them. After all, it is hardly possible to inculcate the kind of professional norms and loyalties demanded by Medical Schools in a brief exposure to a few education courses of which practice teaching is the most exciting component. Teachers turn to the union or the education association for behavior norms for such organizations protect the welfare of teachers for longer periods during a career. Since practically every college in the country seems to turn out teachers almost as an afterthought, the market is surfeited with candidates, particularly in these days of a ready supply. Those institutions which try to develop and maintain expensive exemplary programs are submerged under the unceasing flood of new entrants from low cost competitors; a sort of Gresham's Law seems to operate. Because local

school systems often prefer adjustable and tractable individuals and do not wish to spend time and money in extensive recruiting efforts, quality is often sacrificed for convenience. What difference does it make where one is trained to satisfy certification demands if teaching is principally an art learned best in the public school trenches?

Public school teachers have often taken advanced degrees in education but the underlying impulse has been not love and respect for the discipline, education, but rather to move up a notch on the salary schedule. Schools of Education have accommodated their clients by easing residence expectations, eliminating foreign language requirements, simplifying course demands, and substituting action research for basic research. The result has not been gratifying.

Teachers have pursued the degrees, but cursed the local regulations which forced them to attend summer and evening school classes. Moreover, they are convinced that it is impossible to lay down principles of teaching and that the best teacher is likely to be the one who is improvising and experimenting in the presence of his class. The teacher I describe is perplexed by the "scientific" articles which appear regularly in educational journals, invariably laced by what to him are undecipherable statistical notations.⁵

Certification of teachers is facing strong challenges from outside the university walls. A weak power base within the body politic of the university has been tolerable because educationists did have an exalted status with their outside constituency, the practitioners. Now that preferential position is under attack. State departments of education have been infused with new life due to massive federal monies. At present,

in fact, it is the state departments who are initiating reforms in teacher education. The performance based teacher education movement is a case in point; state initiative in Florida, New York, Texas, and Washington nurtured the movement. Nevertheless, greater multiplication of state power may ultimately be quite destructive of the freedom to innovate. Lest this statement seem an overwrought way of looking at the issue, consider how a compulsory and standardized teacher preparation design enforced by state codes would threaten the twin hallowed academic principles of diversity in programming and institutional autonomy.

Federal intervention in teacher education has, if possible, more noxious implications. The development of a sane program for educating and reeducating teachers has to be a time-consuming and complicated process; years have passed but little of substance has changed. One of the things most distressing about the federal incursion into this mushy field of study is the extent to which the Office of Education is dominated by uncritical amateurs, most of whom have never confronted a pupil in a real classroom. This naivete is accompanied by an extreme intolerance of educationists coupled with a remarkable faith in the superior wisdom of liberal arts professors, research organizations like some educational testing services, and minority group spokesmen with a touch of glamor.⁶ Ideologues within the Office of Education seem utterly unaware of the ambiguity of much of their pronouncements; the iron laws callously enforced by federal educational bureaucrats favor those institutions who are the least venturesome. Venturesome, as used in this context, means a willingness to chart one's own course, independently of

what may be au courant in the Office of Education. The Washington game, as it is euphemistically called, requires the ability to interpret what it is that the new mandarins want and then to propose it to them in a subsequent grant submission. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending upon one's viewpoint, federal policy level administrators change so frequently that few programs ever remain in existence long enough to be thoroughly researched or tested.

To sum up so far: schools of education occupy a tenuous position within the internal structure of their own institutions; also, they are held in low repute by many of their external reference groups, particularly teacher organizations, public school administrators, state departments of education, and the Office of Education. In short, schools of education do not campaign from a position of strength; they are viewed as replaceable or even unnecessary. It is in this framework that a Dean must exercise his leadership talents.

The only national organization charged with helping schools of education improve their lot is the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. AACTE, as it is normally referred to, has provided on a minimal budget considerable leadership through its annual conference, special study commissions, publications, political lobbying, and the like. Without AACTE, schools of education would have no permanent structure around which to rally their forces. However, since dues are assessed to institutions rather than individuals, AACTE lacks the resources to expand its services in the dramatic fashion demanded by the times.

While this analysis may appear to be uncommonly bleak, there is still time left to initiate the new forms of governance schools of education so

desperately need. We must look at the options open to a dean of a school of education with a strong desire to build an exemplary pre-service and in-service teacher preparation program. To start with, most deans spend the bulk of their time facilitating and assisting faculty members; "to make great teaching possible" is ^{their} ~~his~~ leadership challenge. This emphasis on service to others takes inordinate amounts of time; propounding the mission of a school or department of education and keeping this vision in front of its members is frequently sacrificed on the altar of necessity-- interpersonal conflicts must be resolved, budgets have to be submitted, invitations to speak are insatiable, and there are always countless meetings to attend. These management routines sap the strength and energy of administrators and divert them from true leadership tasks.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the most common administrative ploy has been to stress incrementalism; the current policies and practices are modified slightly to make them more responsive to a specific pressure. Ordinarily, a faculty committee usually abetted by some students with hirsute adornment is formed and charged with reviewing the present program; the charge to the committee implies that changes should be suggested to the entire faculty for approval. Ratification dutifully takes place. Since committees are notoriously slow and methodical in their deliberations, the final product which emerges is hardly revolutionary and business goes on relatively unscathed. Usually, faculty members are not even aware of the modest changes enacted.

A preferred tactic by some reformers is the creation of a new agency within an ongoing institution. Vito Perrone took this route when he developed the New School at the University of North Dakota.⁷ The School

of Education at the University was bypassed; automatically this technique unfroze all the encrusted patterns and traditions. The pain of replacing dissidents was exchanged for the pleasure of employing true believers. Sooner or later, however, new institutes of this kind must make their peace with the established rules and regulations of the university community if they are to be accepted as legitimate; otherwise they will remain as appendages and thereby suffer the depredations reserved for deviants. The beauty and appeal of this approach is self-evident; it is an opportunity to start from ground zero and plan without immediately facing up to a seemingly insurmountable list of constraints.

Another similar alternative is the notion behind the Renewal Center concept, a current favorite of the Office of Education. Given that the college or university setting is reactionary and impervious to change, might it not be more productive to withdraw completely from this insane environment and begin anew where the action is, ^{in the school community} ~~the inner core of our~~ ^{itself.} ~~urban cities.~~ This supposedly radical substitute for schools of education is based on the assumption that teaching is a craft and the best way to learn a skill is to practice it. Craftsmen have one distinct advantage; they have a predetermined end. The carpenter knows what he is making; the navigator has to get the ship into port. Now the difficulty about teaching in the complex situation is that the ends themselves are mysterious and so, in a very important sense, even the best teacher doesn't know what he is doing. If he did know, the remedy for poor teaching practices would be technical or skill instruction.

On the surface Renewal Centers are appealing because they seem so logical and pragmatic. New experiments in learning can be launched, and

on-site and in-service activities can be directed to specific task improvement. No longer will the teacher have to sit at the feet of the theoretician; he can learn from his peers who really know what to do on Monday. But is it wise to separate teacher education from the universities and reduce it to a craft?

The sort of doomsday approach typified by those who call for the advocate dean is worthy of examination. The advocate, by definition, has a clear idea where he is going and he is determined to see that no one interferes. Machiavelli is the patron saint of this type of leadership; since such a dean has to deal with individuals who are sometimes unscrupulous, he cannot easily avoid deceit. He conquers resistance by cooptation, reward and punishment, guile, fear, salesmanship, imperiousness or whatever political manipulation is appropriate rather than relying totally on a higher morality. While pretending to be leading a crusade, in action he is visibly an authoritarian. To function successfully with this flimsy facade one must be extraordinarily adroit; it is well known that a reputation for deceit makes it hard for a man to deceive successfully.

Finally, we have the systems man whose catechism is equally prescriptive. First, objectives must be defined, activities implemented to fit these objectives, and assessment measures derived to test achievement of those objectives. Feedback is the dynamic component; the system is revised as new information is received and catalogued. The process is repeated over and over again in a cyclical fashion. It is a neat and mechanistic approach with a loyal band of supporters.

Not one is
None of these models ~~are~~ fully attractive to me. At the same time
I am aware that teacher education has been extremely inhospitable to most

efforts designed to expand its data base. Nobody seriously wants the government involved in making programs, and nobody who has even a nodding acquaintance with legislative bodies wants programs designed to express state policy. We are too familiar with the parochial curricular requirements which are sometimes promulgated by legislatures who in their innocence do not know what they do.

One point should be emphasized. Authorization to prepare teachers is too easily obtainable; state departments of education have through the approved program route made it possible for nearly all colleges to recommend receipt of a teaching license to its eligible graduates even when a regional association or the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has denied institutional accreditation. State departments should refuse to approve programs which are manifestly weak but political considerations make this type of major surgery an unlikely happening.

Innovation, experiment, reform--these crucial dimensions--do not emanate from overworked schools or departments of education living on a bare-bones budget. My argument is this: teacher education cannot flourish in a hostile or indifferent environment and we would be well served if about half of the current colleges and universities stopped producing teachers. Let only the best survive.

This hopefully startling recommendation does not imply that all small institutions will be exorcised from our ranks; in fact the record shows that very few large colleges or universities have been noted for program development; their emphasis has been elsewhere.

I have yet to discover how it is possible to stimulate significant reform within a well established university by modest structural changes, revisions in admission requirements, or minor additions or deletions to the curriculum. These are the time honored mechanisms used by faculty members to keep things stabilized and they are unusually adept at practicing the occult art of strategic concession instead of blatant resistance. The argument always kept in reserve in the event that the walls come crumbling down is the sacred principle of professorial autonomy. Professors are highly individualistic human beings: they are not terribly interested in curricular reform since such efforts involve working with others on policies and ideas which do not contribute significantly to their own careers. This is the main reason teacher education has been so static.

Both efficiency and economy have been out of vogue in higher education for some time; in fact, Erickson has suggested that the present open system is characterized by such diffusion of power that no one can do much to alter things dramatically.⁸ If so, the administrator is powerless. To some degree this indictment is an accurate one.

The lack of fiscal constraint coupled with the philosophy of individual autonomy has in the recent past encouraged college administrators to implement in a neutral fashion the policies made by others. Examples abound: faculty members bypass their departmental chairmen and go directly to the dean with or without the chairman's knowledge; some faculty members even bypass their dean; competition between departments for resources reduces effective communication; short-deadlined requests by higher echelons for varying information and predictions take precedence over school

priorities, and rapid turnover of top administrators at the president and chancellor level creates uncertainties. The upshot is that the administrator has to adjust his style to a non-hierarchical structure in a continuous state of flux.

While I am not enamored by the "God complex" theory of administration, I believe that administrators have failed to fight hard enough for the policies they consider important. As I have mentioned, the prevailing practice has been supportive of the professoriat; perhaps this laissez-faire approach grew out of necessity when college jobs were plentiful and the desire to retain staff was paramount. Under current budgetary stringencies, the administrator no longer has a valid excuse for failing to provide a sense of purpose and direction.

I also sense a readiness for this more political style of governance particularly in situations where primary financial support comes from the university budget. The most undisciplined members in schools of education have been the grantsmen who benefitted from the pleasures and independence of "soft" money. The new scenario restores some of the power abdicated by deans and department chairmen to these modern day buccaneers. Deans of schools of education, in short, should write up their own manifestoes, distribute them to their colleagues, argue persuasively for enactment, accept criticism willingly, but insist on results.

In any school of education there are some discretionary funds; it is this lever which enterprising deans must use to nudge their faculties along or nothing will happen. The safest course to follow is a policy of drift, reacting mainly to whatever stimuli threatens stability at a given

moment. I do not want to be harsh on those people who choose this route; pressures are real, tension producing, and resolution has to occur. A dean may even wish to return to the professorship in his own institution and fear alienating his future peers. But if the administrator fails to stump for his own beliefs, business as usual is almost inevitable. Hence, the administrator has no moral alternative; advocate or resign. I admit, however, that there is a shortage of people who are willing to fight accepted university practice.

Most desirable, of course, in installing new programs is substantial input from students and the liberal arts faculty. The former must pass through the curricular experiences and the latter provides the essential subject-matter knowledge which any fledgling teacher cannot do without. Getting a working partnership ^{among} ~~between~~ these two groups has baffled most reformers; no matter how representatives are chosen, the question of credibility immediately arises.

While our past experience has been unsatisfactory, it is our duty to uphold the principle of participatory democracy even when accused of fraudulence. For students, an elective system should be devised and the successful candidates woven into the decision-making process. Naturally the exact procedures will differ from campus to campus.

How to deal with the liberal arts constituency is considerably more complicated. Students are transients and their commitment temporary; liberal arts professors are specialists whose status and rank are marginally related to their contributions to School of Education concerns. Fortunately, every institution has a few arts and science professors who are willing to help out. Only the best ~~obtainable~~ minds should be enlisted for this

service and their energy and intelligence should not be dissipated on meaningless chores. Such people should be asked to critically respond to solid proposals, to suggest new directions, and to use their judicious temperament on crucial problems. Endless and directionless committee meetings are certain to drive them away never to return.

Nothing I have said so far should be construed as an intent to exclude professors of education from curricular deliberations. As the most concerned they should be the most active. But quality participation from those who have the most to gain or lose is not automatic. Educationists seek scholarly status within the academy and they, too, have significant numbers who worship first at the altar of knowledge production though my previous remarks indicate that this goal is more of a pretension than an accomplishment.

It should be self-evident by this time that if institutional inertia is to be successfully assailed, the administrator must be a dedicated and courageous person gifted with the best humane qualities known to civilization. Academic reform is a war of attrition and defeat is predictable if resolve is lost under the unyielding pressure of the omnipresent resisters. Still, the administrator must share his power, willingly release some resources for cooperative use, and establish worthy targets. To do otherwise is to abdicate responsibility.

Beyond all of these problems is yet another--the seizure of control by agencies external to the campus. State departments of education have relinquished their custodial role, state legislatures through fiscal review prescribe directions, boards of regents question the need for schools of education in the face of an alleged teacher surplus and an

unbalanced budget, and community groups press hard for changes in teacher education.

I have left for last the more uncertain factor in the equation. What stance will the organized teaching profession take? The successful unionization of teachers, a possibility considered remote twenty years ago, provides an entirely new environment. Teacher unions are readying legislative proposals which if passed would place the control of teacher education firmly in the hands of classroom teachers. Teacher unions may recommend new training programs but they are not in a position to replace the college as the ultimate trainer.

If teacher unions or associations attempt to usurp the whole job of teacher education, the knowledge base is certain to suffer and we will be wallowing in the mystique of best practice, a return to the limitations of apprenticeship, and an end to the hope of professionalism. Whatever the outcome of this political effort, the long standing shared responsibility among state departments, public school systems, and colleges and universities is likely to be shattered.

Again, it is the administrator who must shoulder the burden of building a rapprochement with the teachers who toil daily in the schools.

What matters at this juncture is the integration of the significant experiences and unique perspectives of the teacher-in-service with the college professor who, by definition, is responsible for studying the educational process in all its complexities. Barring some unforeseen societal revolution, the majority of those individuals who will be teaching for the next twenty years are now in place. The real needs in the future will focus on in-service education of practitioners not pre-service

education. If career education, performance based teacher education, or human relations training, to cite a few examples, are to be successful, teachers-in-service must be able to cope with these concepts and feel comfortable about them. This suggests a massive reeducation process, part of which should be conducted on site and part in the university in order to counteract any rigid separation between practice or theory.

It is simple to explicate the impediments to change; it is difficult to provide guidance to the individual who wishes to make a difference. Much of the intellectual criticism of teacher education has been^a continual litany of despair; while the specific facts and words are right, the music seems strangely out of tune with reality. To be specific, a recent special opinion poll conducted by George Gallup for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation indicates that the public thinks of education largely in a conservative way. The inevitable conclusion is that the public is not looking for radical approaches to education; it seeks not to deschool society but to hold schools accountable for teaching basic and practical skills.

The real issue to be faced is the delicate matter of arriving at some notion of what we want schools to do, of what teachers should accomplish, and the kinds of teachers who should emerge from teacher-education. Innovation as an abstraction is unsatisfying. We need more innovation calculated on the basis of the kind of teacher who can be consistent with a good philosophy of education, both individual and social. Much of what has been under discussion, in the literature including, I think, performance-based teacher education, has been detached from this principle.

The force for constructive change within the university at the present moment is the administration. Faculties as a group have let the administration suffer defeats while abdicating responsibilities. Schools of education need deans who are ready to accept the responsibility which is inherent in their roles. Deans have legitimate authority and they should use it; if it is not used, ineffectiveness and disrespect are inevitable.

A strong dean is the most viable of the alternatives available. The faculty has substantial protection through its power to initiate recall proceedings. It is not suggested that a dean should suddenly become arbitrary or disingenuous, only that he have ideas and be willing to express and act on them. The faculty must participate fully in important policy decisions; to act unilaterally is to guarantee failure.

Leadership theory is explicit on this point. Once an administrator takes a clear position, as soon as others have to respond to his initiatives, his leadership role is enhanced (if he is wise). While this prescription may sound antediluvian, the times dictate resolute leaders. The future of teacher education is at stake; the process manager is no longer an appropriate model.

¹

Stephen J. Knezevich, Edward A. Krug, Henry S. Lufler, and John R. Palmer of the University of Wisconsin critiqued the first draft of this chapter; their comments were both helpful and incisive.

²

See Robert S. Nathan, "Messiah of the Ed Schools," Change, Volume 3, No. 6, October, 1971, pp. 51-56. Dwight Allen, a noted maverick among education deans, tried a number of radical changes at the University of Massachusetts but practically all of his ideas were ridiculed by a university faculty reviewing committee. The merits of Allen's proposals may be debatable; the fact that he was unable to change his university structure is not.

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There are numerous exceptions to these generalizations including my own institution; in most places, however, this dismal recital is an accurate representation of the facts not a caricature.

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See Lee J. Cronbach and Patrick Suppes (editors), Research for Tomorrow's Schools: Disciplined Inquiry for Educators, (New York: The Macmillan Company), 1969, pp. 281.

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These prevailing attitudes appear in one form or another in practically all opinion surveys given to teachers.

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The National Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Education of Teachers directed by Paul Olson at the University of Nebraska and supported by the federal government is a concrete example.

Olson's group is utterly opposed to educationists and advocates greater emphasis on community and parent needs, elimination of credentials, client control, value consciousness, and the like.

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See Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House) 1970, p. 474.

8

See Donald A. Erickson, "Moral Dilemmas of Administrative Powerlessness," Administrator's Notebook, Vol. XX, April, 1972, No. 8.